

AN ADDITIONAL VARANID SPECIES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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ABSTRACT

An additional species of varanid lizard, *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, has been recorded in the tropical north of the Northern Territory.

KEYWORDS: Reptilia, Varanidae, *Varanus glauerti*, Northern Territory.

INTRODUCTION

The Varanidae is a widely distributed group of generally large tetrapod reptiles which range throughout Africa, Asia, Russia, the Middle East, South East Asia and Australia. The greatest diversity occurs within Australia where some 26 species are now recognized. In the Northern Territory, 20 species and subspecies of *Varanus* have been described and new species are still being encountered.

The Northern Territory varanids include: *V. a. acanthurus* Boulenger, 1885, *V. a. insulanicus* Mertens, 1958, *V. baritji* King and Horner, 1987, *V. brevicauda* Boulenger, 1898, *V. eremius* Lucas and Frost, 1895, *V. giganteus* (Gray, 1845), *V. gilleni* Lucas and Frost, 1895; *V. glebopalma* Mitchell, 1955, *V. gouldii* (Gray, 1838), *V. indicus* (Daudin, 1802), *V. kingorum* Storr, 1980, *V. mertensi* Glauert, 1951, *V. mitchelli* Mertens, 1958, *V. panoptes* Storr, 1980, *V. primordius* Mertens, 1942, *V. spenceri* Lucas and Frost, 1903, *V. storri ocreatus* Storr, 1980, *V. scalaris* Mertens 1941, *V. t. tristis* Fry (1913) and *V. t. orientalis* (Schlegel, 1839).

SYSTEMATICS

Varanus glauerti Mertens

(Figs 1, 2)

Material. A.M. R.59,658, Deaf Adder Gorge, 13°03'S 132°52'E, Northern Territory, 1972, coll. W. Bolton and D. Lindner.

Notes. Mertens (1957) described an attractive and relatively large rock dwelling monitor from the Kimberley division of Western Australia and named it *Varanus timorensis glauerti*. Subsequently, this sub-

species was elevated to species level (Storr 1980). The presence of this species within the Northern Territory is under some debate. Cogger (1986) describes *V. glauerti* as being restricted in its distribution to the Kimberley region of Western Australia, whereas, Storr *et al.* (1983) allude to its occurrence in the Northern Territory, but do not list their reasons for doing so.

Peter Rankin, a young Australian herpetologist who was tragically killed on a collecting trip in New Caledonia, found a specimen of *V. glauerti* in the Australian Museum collection. The animal (Fig. 1) had been collected at Deaf Adder Gorge, western Arnhem Land (additional details given above). A.M. R59,658 was compared to the holotype of *V. glauerti* (WAM R12,337) by P. Rankin and was determined to be this species.

A second specimen of *V. glauerti* was photographed by G. Chaloupka (Northern Territory Museum) in April 1980, while it was foraging in leaf litter amongst boulders, at Mount Gilruth 13°12'S 133°05'E, which is the highest point on the Arnhem Land escarpment, and about 10km from the first observation. This specimen (Fig. 2) is also unambiguously *V. glauerti*. The proximity of these animals suggests that the distribution of *V. glauerti* includes at least a portion of the Arnhem Land escarpment in the Northern Territory. The specimens of *V. glauerti* from the western Kimberley have an ocellated baek pattern (Storr *et al.* 1983), whereas those from the eastern Kimberley have a barred baek pattern. As one might expect, on the basis of geographic proximity the specimens encountered in the Northern Territory are of the barred variety.



Fig. 1. *Varanus glauerti* A.M. R.59,658 from Deaf Adder Gorge, N.T.



Fig. 2. *Varanus glauerti* photographed at Mount Gilruth, N.T.

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